

Community immunity

Community (or herd) immunity helps slow down and stop the spread of disease among people. It only works when the majority of a population has immunity to the disease. For some diseases, such as measles, at least 9 out of 10 of us must have immunity to keep the diseases from spreading. When you, your child, and other family members are immunized, you also protect those who:

- Have weak immune systems, such as those with heart disease or cancer.
- Are not fully immunized.
- Cannot get shots because they are too young, too old, or have a medical condition.

If your child is not fully immunized for his age, or if you have questions about vaccines, talk to your doctor or nurse. For more information, visit www.doh.wa.gov or call your local health department.

Care for your growing child's teeth

Help your child brush well at least twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Floss in between teeth. Avoid snacks with sugar and starch.

Watch for the permanent six-year molars which may come in now. Talk with the dentist about getting dental sealants on the first permanent molars to prevent cavities.

For active children, ask the dentist about using a mouth guard to prevent teeth from being damaged or knocked out during sports. This is important as all teeth, baby teeth and permanent teeth, are needed for speech and to keep other teeth in place. Protect the teeth, jaw, and head from injury by using:

- A booster seat on every car ride.
- A helmet for active sports such as bicycling, skateboarding, skating, skiing, and riding a scooter.

If a permanent tooth is lost or knocked out, take your child to a dentist within two hours. The tooth can often

be reattached. Hold the tooth by the crown (biting side). Rinse it gently in cold water. Do not scrub. Place the tooth in a secure container of cold milk or a wet cloth. Be sure to list the dentist's phone number on emergency contacts.

Learning about others

As your child gets older and begins to be around more people, he will meet children who are not like him. They may look or sound different, have different abilities, or be part of other kinds of families or cultures. Help him understand that every person is unique and special. If you notice your child staring at someone, remember he is just being curious. Talk to him about what he is seeing and answer any questions he has about the differences he notices in others. Encourage him to make friends with all kinds of people. Try to set a good example yourself.

Make healthy food choices

Talk with your child about the importance of eating foods that help her grow and be healthy. Go to www.choosemyplate.gov for ideas on how to make sure everyone in the family gets the vitamins and minerals they need.

- Every meal and snack should include at least one serving of a fruit or vegetable. One serving for a child this age is about ¼ - ½ cup of fruits or vegetables. Half of a medium-sized apple or six baby carrots is about a ½ cup. Let your child choose a favorite fruit or vegetable for a snack.
- Ask your child to make a list of her favorite foods from each food group. Use this list to help plan meals. Go shopping together and pick out foods from each food group.
- Remember that your child may need to try a food many times before she likes it. Give her lots of chances to try new foods.

Keeping Your Child Healthy and Safe

Help your child deal with stress

Stress can be caused by many things. Both happy and sad things can cause stress. Starting school, family changes (such as a new brother or sister, a move, or a divorce), or broader world events can all be stressful.

Learn when your child is feeling stress by noticing changes in how he behaves. Your child may:

- Feel sick, or cry and whine more often than usual.
- Have temper tantrums or trouble getting along with others.
- Not want to do things he usually enjoys.

There are things that you can do to help your child cope in any stressful situation:

- Keep your daily routines the same as much as possible. This helps your child feel safe.
- Talk with your child to find out what he is feeling and thinking.
- Give your child simple, honest answers. Be sure to answer all his questions but remember that too much information could scare or confuse him.
- Help your child express and release his feelings by doing things such as drawing, playing with dolls or puppets, and being physically active.

Help your child learn to handle strong feelings

You are a role model for your child. Children learn how to treat others by watching you. You set a good example when you show your child respect as you talk about strong feelings and solve problems.

It might be hard to listen to your child when she is very angry or upset. When she is mad at **you** it is even more difficult. Listening to your child will help her calm down and talk. If you need to calm down, take a deep breath and count to ten. Try to listen without interrupting. Kneel or bend down to your child's level. Tell her that you want to hear and understand her feelings. Then you can find ways to solve the problem together.

Questions about sex are normal

You may be uncomfortable or worried about how to answer your child's questions about sex. If you need help, ask your doctor, nurse, or a trusted friend for help and ideas. You can also find helpful books at your local library.

When your child asks you a question about sex or private body parts, keep your answer short and simple. Use the correct words for body parts and try not to seem embarrassed. Find out why your child is asking the question. This may make it easier to answer.

Gun safety at home

It is important to lock up all guns. It is very hard to keep things hidden from curious children. If you have guns in your home, your child will find them and want to play with them.

Storing guns safely is even more important than teaching your child that guns are dangerous.

- Always remove ammunition (bullets) from guns.
- Lock up guns and ammunition separately.
- Use a locking device, such as a gun safe, or lock box.
- Check that the storage device has been approved by going to <http://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist>.

To learn about safe gun storage, go to
www.lokitup.org

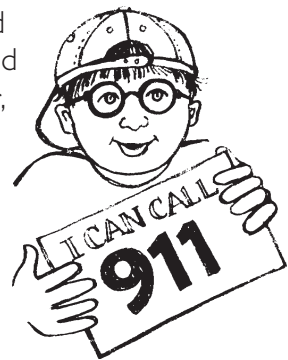
Gun safety away from home

In Washington State, 35 percent of children live in a home with a firearm. An estimated 55,000 of these children live in a household where the firearm is loaded and unlocked. Before your child goes to other children's homes, ask the parents about firearms and how they are stored. Ask about guns just as you would ask about other safety issues, such as booster seats or swimming pools. Then decide whether or not to let your child play there.

Prepare for an emergency

Begin to teach your child how and when to call 911 in case of emergency:

- Use a toy telephone and pretend he is making a call. Help your child practice giving his phone number, address, and parents' full names. If your family uses a cell phone, make sure he knows where the phone is kept and all the steps to make a call.
- Make sure he knows that he should stay calm and answer all of the operator's questions. Let him know that help will be on the way even though the operator may continue to ask questions.
- Teach him not to hang up until the operator tells him to.



Teach your child that 911 is for people emergencies only. (He should not call 911 for hurt animals.) Make sure your child knows never to call 911 as a joke or just to see what might happen. To learn more about teaching children to use 911, call your local fire department.

For the Health of All Our Children

Child Profile is a service of the Washington State Department of Health